

Risk Assessment for Opening Church Buildings to the Public

Version Control

Issue Date	Version Number	Issued by
22 nd May 2020	1	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
8 th June 2020	2	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
12 th June 2020	3	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group
1st July 2020	4	The House of Bishops COVID-19 Recovery Group

Churches and cathedrals have been legally permitted to open for purposes of individual private prayer from 13th June. House of Bishops guidance provided for churches to open for funerals from 15th June. Public worship, with measures in place for social distancing, are allowed from 4th July. Other activities, except for a few still prohibited by law, may also take place in churches, subject to the government guidance in place for the relevant sector.

The [government guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic](#) requires a COVID-19 risk assessment to be carried out for every building and site open to the public. This document provides a template risk assessment, with links to the relevant advice notes. It relates to opening up church and cathedral buildings to clergy and members of the public entering for any permitted purposes. As well as offering guidance on best-practice, it is also intended to help parishes make a decision on whether to open for any or all of these purposes or not, based on their local circumstances, resources and context. You should read the advice on re-opening buildings and the guidance on public worship before completing this assessment. Both are available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Future versions of this document will be produced when there is any substantive change to the guidance on the safe use of places of worship.

A separate risk assessment relating to contractors and construction workers is available on the [Church of England Coronavirus pages](#).

Carrying out a risk assessment

1. Agree what activities you are planning for:
 - Private prayer (clergy only)
 - Livestreaming services (clergy only)
 - Private prayer (general public)
 - Public worship
 - Rites of passage services
 - Opening for visitors and tourists
2. Consider the hazards:
 - Transmission of COVID-19
 - Hazards arising from the temporary closure of the church
 - Hazards arising from now using the church in a different way

Read the guidance and think about how it relates specifically to your church. What constraints are there? Consider how people will arrive at the church, including if they will need to wait or queue outside; how people will enter and leave the church; circulation inside: from the entrance to the worship space and out again; circulation within the worship space; also access to other areas including the toilet(s).

3. Consider who might be harmed and how? Read the guidance and think about how the activities you are planning will affect different groups of people. The risks are not different for larger churches so long as they are properly managed, but having more people coming through your building makes the possible impact – for example of someone with COVID-19 coming into contact with others – higher than in smaller venues with fewer people. Consider your particular circumstances and adapt the checklist below as appropriate.
4. Using the risk assessment checklist below as a template:
 - add in mitigations for any risks that are particular to your circumstances that may not be on the list;
 - record what you need to do for each activity to go ahead safely;
 - consider any equipment you need and any temporary changes you might need to make to the church;
 - check back against your list of activities to confirm which ones can go ahead and when.

Risk assessment template

Church: St Dunstan, Hunsdon	Assessor's name: Mark Dunstan	Date completed: 30 th August	Review date: By 31 st October
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Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
Access to church buildings for clergy for purposes of private prayer and/or livestreaming General advice on accessing church buildings can be found here.	One point of entry to the church building clearly identified and separate from public entry if possible	Clergy / Keyholder entry by chancel door. Door handle to be wiped after use.	Key Holders	Ongoing
	A suitable lone working policy has been consulted if relevant. An example can be found here .	Overarching Policy Produced. Produce for cleaners and others in context of “working” in the church building	MD LN	MD 1 st July LN Ongoing
	Buildings have been aired before use.	Building has been opened periodically since July 4th	MD	MD 4 th July
	Check for animal waste and general cleanliness.		MD	MD 4 th July
	Ensure water systems are flushed through before use. See Government Guidance for organisations on supplying safe water supplies		N/A	N/A
	Switch on and check electrical and heating systems if needed. Commission system checks as necessary.	All electrics (includes heating) recently serviced following 5-yearly check	LN/MD	Electrics seem okay 26 th Aug (MD)
	Holy water stoups and the font are empty.		N/A	N/A

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Ensure safe use of equipment needed for livestreaming: avoid exceeding safe load on sockets, cables/tripod causing trip hazard		MD	MD 26 th Aug
Deciding whether to open to the public	Discuss with nearby venues and businesses to ensure that the timing and practical arrangements for using the church are compatible.		N/A	N/A
	Update your website, A Church Near You, and any relevant social media.		MD	MD 30 th Aug
	Consider if a booking system is needed, whether for general access or for specific events/services	Church is large enough for usual congregation without booking system. Will keep under review	PCC	PCC 30 th Aug (agreed via email)
	If opening to tourists consider applying for the Visit Britain 'Good to Go' standard mark. Apply here .		N/A	N/A
Preparation of the Church for access by members of the public for any permitted purposes, including worship and tourism	Confirm that all steps (above) for access by clergy have been carried out before anyone else accesses the building.		MD	MD 4 th July
	Review CofE guide on cleaning church buildings. Complete the 'cleaning' section of this risk assessment (below). Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	See below	LN	See below

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	Choose one point of entry into the church to manage flow of people and indicate this with notices, keeping emergency exits available at all times. Where possible use a different exit.	Entry by tower door, exit by porch. Notices to remind visitors of social distancing will be displayed. At funerals, flow of people can be controlled by voice instruction (service leader and verger)	MD	MD 26 th Aug
	Make any temporary arrangements for people to wait or queue outside the building (taking into account any consequential risks arising from people gathering outside).	Produce A-board sign to position by external door (key for funerals)	MD	MD 26 th Aug
	Where possible, doors and windows should be opened temporarily to improve ventilation.	Tower, Porch and Chancel doors to be left open.	Person unlocking	Ongoing
	Remove Bibles/literature/hymn books/leaflets	Music books for organ left in situ (rare usage)	LN	LN 29 th Jul
	Cordon off or remove from public access any devotional objects or items (if they are liable to be touched or closely breathed on)	No devotional items	N/A	N/A
	Consider if pew cushions/kneelers need to be removed as per government guidance	Can be left in place – building use will be sufficiently infrequent	N/A	N/A
	Remove or isolate children’s resources and play areas	Remove toy bags to vestry	LN	LN 29 th Jul

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	Walk through the church to plan for physical distancing in seats, aisles, at the altar rail, including safe flow of visitors. Remember 2m in all directions from each person (or 1m with risk mitigation if absolutely necessary).	Plan for non-eucharistic service only – only need to arrange distancing measures in seating	LN	LN 29 th Jul
	Clearly mark out seating areas including exclusion zones to maintain distancing.	Rope off every other pew	MD	MD 26 th Aug
	Clearly mark out flow of movement for people entering and leaving the building to maintain physical distancing requirements.	Flow can be managed by voice control	MD	Ongoing
	Limit access to places where the public does not need go, maybe with a temporary cordon in needed.	No entry signs on Vestry & Chapel (access only by clergy/verger/wardens)	MD	MD 26 th Aug
	Determine placement of hand sanitisers available for visitors to use. Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	On external wall to toilet in base of tower (entry) and on poor box by porch door (exit) and choir pew (for “staff”)		29 th Jul
	Determine if temporary changes are needed to the building to facilitate social distancing. Consult advice on gaining temporary permissions .		N/A	N/A
	Put up notices to remind visitors about important safe practices e.g. no physical contact, practice hand washing etc.	With other instructions and signs in place, this is unnecessary and risks over-complicating matters	PCC	PCC 30 th Aug (agreed by email)
	Ensure high-risk surfaces and touch points have been wiped with appropriate sanitiser spray or disposable wipes. Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .		Person unlocking	Ongoing

Area of Focus	Controls required	Additional information	Action by whom?	Completed – date and name
	Check that handwashing facilities have adequate soap provision and paper towels, and a bin for the paper towels. Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.		LN	LN 29 th July
	Where there are toilet facilities, ensure an adequate supply of soap and disposable hand towels, and a bin for towels, are available. Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.		LN	LN 29 th July
	Ensure all waste receptacles have disposable liners (e.g. polythene bin bags) to reduce the risk to those responsible for removing them.		MD	MD 26 th Aug
	If possible, provide safe means for worshippers and visitors to record their name and contact details; retain each day's record for 21 days	MD will note	MD	Ongoing
	Give due notice of the resumption of use of the building to neighbours, congregation and wider community, ensuring that visitors and worshippers will know what to expect when they come.	Via email, website, social media and posters	MD	MD 30 th Aug
Cleaning the church before and after general use (no known exposure to anyone with Coronavirus symptoms)	If the church building has been closed for 72 hours between periods of being open then there is no need for extra cleaning to remove the virus from surfaces.	Standard weekly opening for worship will mean this is okay. Funerals may introduce need for extra cleaning.	N/A	N/A
Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here .	If 72-hour closure is not possible then check all cleaners are not in a vulnerable group or self-isolating.	Should be possible to keep 72-hour gaps. If not, all current cleaners are either vulnerable themselves or live with vulnerable people	LN	May need to co-opt others in extremis

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	Set up a cleaning rota to cover your opening arrangements.	Will be arranged alongside decision to re-open	LN	
	All cleaners provided with gloves (ideally disposable). Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Supply in church	LN	LN 22 nd Aug
	Suitable cleaning materials provided, depending on materials and if historic surfaces are to be cleaned. Register with Parish Buying for procurement options.	Supply in church	LN	LN 22 nd Aug
	Confirm person responsible for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site.	Person who unlocks church. N.B. Must not be “vulnerable” person.	Person unlocking	Ongoing
	Confirm the frequency for removing potentially contaminated waste (e.g. hand towels) from the site – suggested daily removal.	Upon each opening	PCC	PCC 2 nd Aug
Cleaning the church after known exposure to someone with Coronavirus symptoms	If possible close the church building for 72 hours with no access permitted.	Should be possible	PCC	PCC 2 nd Aug
	If 72-hour closure is not possible then follow Public Health England guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings. Public Health England guidance available here.	Only likely if 2 funerals in 1 week or if at funeral on Thu / Fri (would affect Sunday service when we have them). Would need professional clean	MD/LN to advise as soon as contamination is known	Ongoing, as soon as contamination is known
	If the building has been quarantined for 72 hours, then carry out cleaning as per the normal advice on cleaning. Advice on cleaning church buildings can be found here.			Ongoing